

Health and Human Services Subcommittee
Wednesday 1-19-11
Developmental Disability Services Hearing

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

My name is Brad Lancaster. I am a banker at Wells Fargo Bank and I office in Helena. I am here as a volunteer board member for Helena Industries, a not-for-profit business that focuses on employment services, job creation and case management for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Helena Industries recently achieved its 40th year of service to individuals with developmental disabilities (that I now refer to as "clients"), a feat that is a great source of pride for the organization.

Becoming an involved board member has made me a passionate advocate for Helena Industries, its incredibly dedicated staff, and especially its clients. Testifying to you is NOT in my comfort zone – but for Helena Industries, I'm honored to do it.

I've learned a great deal since starting on the board 4 ½ years ago. I'd like to share with you some of the most impactful:

1. I now recognize clients as individuals with abilities – rather than with disabilities. They just may have different abilities than you or I.
2. Our clients and staff LOVE to work!
3. They all love to provide value.
4. They all love to be valued.
5. Helena Industries provides meaningful jobs and services that generate revenue that help individuals with developmental disabilities contribute to their own well-being.
6. In spite of a very low cost structure – and lack of staff pay increases for several years - Helena Industries is losing money on Developmental Disabilities Program services.
7. We are doing our best to adapt and change and we are sincerely hoping we won't be forced to eliminate some services.
8. Any further cuts in revenue will be devastating.
9. We have done our best to overcome shortfalls by supplementing income from other businesses we operate – primarily fabric sewing/manufacturing, woodworking, janitorial and mail services divisions. Unfortunately, the general economic downturn (read - lack of contracts in these divisions) has significantly diminished our ability to supplement losses.

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10. We recently opened the Helena Industries Thrift store in effort to provide another avenue for jobs – and an additional revenue source.
11. The sweater I'm wearing today is a sample of some of the clothing we sell. I invite you to visit the store at the intersection of Montana Avenue and Cedar Street. I think you'll like it and we would love to have your business!
12. I'd also like to invite all of you to visit our other operations as well. Please contact our Director – Wally Melcher, at headquarters at 1325 Helena Avenue – 442-8632.
13. We believe our services are essential to help keep people helping themselves vs. having to rely on other forms of public assistance.
14. We are not ready to give up - and with continuation of your help, we hope to keep providing services and jobs to individuals who otherwise may have limited alternatives – long in to the future!

Thank you very much for your past support and we ask for your continued support going forward. Thank you for your time!

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